



د کانو وزارت
وزارت معادن

د افغانستان اسلامي
جمهوريت
حکومت اسلامي افغانستان



Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
Ministry of Mines

Afghanistan's Ministry of Mines unveils new geological data center

Capable of storing 100 terabytes of data, high-tech center houses 50 years of survey data, accelerates development of country's mining industry

KABUL, Afghanistan (June 5, 2011) – Afghanistan's Minister of Mines Wahidullah Shahrani today announced the opening of a modern data center at the Afghanistan Geological Survey that will act as a single repository for the country's voluminous geological data. Another pivotal element to Afghanistan becoming an important mining country, the center will be key to the work of Afghan geologists as well as international investors interested in bidding to unearth the country's substantial mineral wealth.

The data center, which was designed and funded by the U.S. Task Force for Business and Stability Operations, will house more than 50 years worth of geological data compiled by geologists from the United States, Russia, Britain, Germany and Afghanistan. Over the past year, geologists from TFBSO, U.S. Geological Survey and AGS portioned Afghanistan's vast mineral wealth into 24 areas of interest based on security, scale, market value, infrastructure needs and availability, and time to impact. These areas of interest are all potential mining districts with one or more mineral deposits – both metallic and industrial – that could contribute to building a broad based mining industry in Afghanistan. The recent sampling work and remote sensing completed by the USGS in Afghanistan has created, arguably, the most extensive mineral dataset ever compiled for a single country. At a time of growing concern over a global resource deficit, Afghanistan will become a major new source of minerals, precious metals and rare earth elements.

"In a mere year, the conversation within leading mining communities and between the world's foremost mining companies has shifted from quiet curiosity to one of very real prospects that Afghanistan will one day be a leading mining country," Shahrani said. "This data center represents another significant stride to ultimately reach that mining prominence and allow Afghanistan to stand on its own two feet economically vice being dependent upon international donor aid."

The AGS Data Center was designed by technical experts from TFBSO, IBM and USGS to centralize Afghanistan's geological data in one location. With a secured server room and adjacent computer lab, the data center has server and storage capable of housing 100 terabytes of information, as well as racks and storage for expansion. It will store a range of geological data including topographical maps and raster images, allowing for full functionality of the geological software, including ArcGIS, Geosoft and ENVI platforms.

"Creation of this data center will allow the Afghan government, its citizens, investors and others to quickly and easily search databases to identify economic opportunities within Afghanistan," said Paul A. Brinkley, U.S. deputy under secretary of defense and TFBSO director. "This is an important part of a far-reaching effort to help Afghanistan modernize access to its extensive mineral resources holdings."

Following a specialized training program, AGS geologists will have the capability to pull data from the server, control the various workstations in the computer lab, and independently operate and maintain the data center. This will support continued use and growth of the Afghan geological database. It will also be a place where international investors can investigate the potential of one of Afghanistan's numerous mineral deposits.

About TFBSO

The Task Force for Business and Stability Operations was formed by the U.S. Department of Defense in 2006 to leverage American and international economic power as a strategic tool for promoting economic stabilization. Since then, the Task Force's mission has been to reduce violence, enhance stability, and restore economic normalcy in areas where unrest and insurgency have created a synchronous downward spiral of economic hardship and violence. The Task Force does this by developing economic opportunities through a range of efforts, including the encouragement of investment by U.S. and Western businesses, assisting industrial development, encouraging banking and financial system development, agricultural revitalization, and the economically and environmentally responsible development of a country's natural resources. The Task Force initiates every project with the assumption that the absence of a viable economic base is one of the primary factors that has historically led to state failure.

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